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OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON THE REVIEW
OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH
NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS
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GENERAL REVIEW OF ARRANGEMENTS FOR CONSULTATIONS WITH NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Statement submitted by the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council, category I

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraph 10 of the annex to Economic and Social Council resolution 1993/80.

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1. The International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU), which represents 126 million working people in 187 affiliated organizations in 134 countries and territories, looks back on 46 years of cooperation with the United Nations.

2. It is therefore of great importance to ICFTU that the current review of arrangements for consultations with non-governmental organizations result in enhancing the consultative relationship. ICFTU therefore respectfully submits a number of comments and suggestions regarding the proposals contained in the document (E/AC.70/1995/CRP.1) prepared for the meeting of the Working Group.

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* E/AC.70/1995/1.

Introduction

3. ICFTU proposes that the introduction be deleted. From the purely formal point of view, it would not seem to fit into a United Nations resolution; as regards its substance, it appears to be based on a number of assumptions with which we disagree.

4. Partnerships between non-governmental organizations in developed and developing countries are not a new phenomenon. They have existed for a long time within international organizations. Many of the newly emerging non-governmental organizations have already joined such organizations and are benefiting from the international solidarity and support that they can offer.

5. The call to establish a balance between non-governmental organizations from developed and developing countries disregards the fact that the majority of organizations affiliated to international non-governmental organizations are in fact located in developing countries. As to establishing a balance between international and national organizations, this would not only present a host of problems of a practical and political nature but would also be in contravention of Article 71 of the Charter of the United Nations, which clearly places the focus on international organizations.

6. Moreover, there appears to be a confusion between the role of non-governmental organizations in consultative status in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) and the work carried out by non-governmental organizations in the field and in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

7. The recommendations to the General Assembly in the last paragraph of the proposal, while welcome, would seem to require a separate resolution to be submitted to the General Assembly through the Economic and Social Council.

Paragraph 4

8. ICFTU agrees with the addition of "environment" but would wish to see "cultural, educational, health" etc. retained. Also, "humanitarian and human rights issues" should not be listed separately as though they were not within the competence of the Council.

Paragraph 7

9. The reference to "major groups as defined in Agenda 21", followed by the listing of some groups covered by that term, makes this paragraph somewhat vague. If any such groups are to be singled out, trade unions should be added.

Paragraph 8

10. The Charter of the United Nations clearly states that such arrangements may be made with international organizations, and, where appropriate, with national organizations after consultation with the Member of the United Nations concerned. Accordingly, the focus on working through international non-governmental organizations should be maintained.

Paragraph 10

11. The inclusion of organizations that accept members designated by governmental authorities is unacceptable. This provision is a legacy of the cold war that should be dropped.

Paragraph 11

12. ICFTU objects to the elimination of the phrase "covering, where possible, a substantial number of countries in different regions of the world". The original text would still permit admission of national organizations but would keep the focus on international organizations in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations. Old paragraph 10, which has been retained, would now also be in contradiction with new paragraph 11, as it refers to international organizations.

Paragraph 15

13. ICFTU feels that old paragraph 9 should be retained, since it does allow for the admittance of national organizations and retains the focus on international organizations.

14. ICFTU agrees in principle that national organizations affiliated to an international or regional non-governmental organization should not be admitted, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations. Moreover, if a large number of national non-governmental organizations were to receive consultative status, those organizations that practise international solidarity by working within international organizations would be put at a disadvantage. On the other hand, if national affiliates were to receive separate status, the number of non-governmental organizations would quickly reach numbers that would make the system totally unmanageable.

Paragraph 18

15. It would indeed be desirable to facilitate the cooperation of national and regional organizations (including regional organizations of internationals) with the regional commissions.

Paragraph 19

16. Cooperation between UNDP and other United Nations bodies and regional and national organizations in relation to operational activities is important and desirable but is a separate issue that is not necessarily within the realm of consultative status.

Section 3

17. ICFTU can only support option 1. It would be impossible to categorize non-governmental organizations in accordance with the categories listed in option 2. As to option 3, ICFTU does not see how a large organization, such as those in category I or general consultative status, could be treated in the same manner as a small group devoted to a single issue.

Paragraph 29

18. The word "general" has evidently been left out by mistake.

Paragraph 31

19. ICFTU strongly urges deletion of the phrase "subject to available resources". If the consultative relationship is to be enhanced, it is imperative that the existing rights of non-governmental organizations in consultative status be maintained and be restored where they have been suspended.

Paragraph 32 (d)

20. Again, the word "general" has evidently been omitted by mistake.

Paragraph 37

21. Again, ICFTU strongly urges deletion of the phrase "subject to available resources".

Paragraph 51

22. This paragraph should be divided into two in order to distinguish between organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and organizations especially accredited to a United Nations conference. Moreover, international non-governmental organizations are by definition constituencies. Also, any grouping of non-governmental organizations for the purpose of presenting a common statement should only occur on a strictly voluntary basis.

Paragraph 59 (i)

23. ICFTU would question the advisability of having the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations of the Economic and Social Council organize meetings on matters of substance, since this would divert from its essential role.

Paragraphs 66 and 67

24. These two paragraphs would be better placed in a separate resolution.